

### **3. Payment of MGNREGS in Foodgrains**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Schemes

**Mains Syllabus:** GS-II Welfare schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the Population by the Centre and States and the performance of these Schemes; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

#### **Why in News?**

- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in a letter to Union Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has asked the Centre to allow payment of the MGNREGA wages in the form of Foodgrains.

#### **What is the reason for Chhattisgarh's demand?**

- The Chief Minister proposed that handing the workers foodgrains directly is better due to the lockdown and the continuing scare of the COVID-19.
- "Once we credit the MGNREGA wages, the worker will have to go to the banks to withdraw the money. This would not only be a bother but also could jeopardise social distancing norms."
- Chhattisgarh does not have many bank branches and faces the problem of Internet connectivity in Naxal-affected areas. "Due to this, there are often problems like link failure and workers have to contact the branch many times to withdraw the amount," he wrote in his letter.

#### **What is the Concern?**

- There are many concerns about making payments through foodgrains like at what rate the grains would be charged. Will the government make the payments based on the PDS or the FCI rates.
- The other concern is that the pay-outs during the pandemic should not exhaust the 100-day entitlement.
- These payments via food grains should not eat into the 100-day entitlement per family. Because they will need employment even after this pandemic subsides.
- If accessibility to banks is a problem, then the government must make timely cash payments in a public place.

#### **About MGNREGA:**

- The scheme was introduced as a social measure that guarantees "the right to work".

- The key tenet of this social measure and labour law is that the local government will have to legally provide at least 100 days of wage employment in rural India to enhance their quality of life.

### **Key Objectives of the Scheme:**

- Generation of paid rural employment of not less than 100 days for each worker who volunteers for unskilled labour.
- Proactively ensuring social inclusion by strengthening livelihood base of rural poor.
- Creation of durable assets in rural areas such as wells, ponds, roads and canals.
- Reduce urban migration from rural areas.
- Create rural infrastructure by using untapped rural labour.

### **Eligibility criteria for receiving the benefits under MGNREGA scheme:**

- Must be Citizen of India to seek NREGA benefits.
- Job seeker has completed 18 years of age at the time of application.
- The applicant must be part of a local household (i.e. application must be made with local Gram Panchayat).
- Applicant must volunteer for unskilled labour.

### **What are the other Key Facts Related to the Scheme?**

- The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Government of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.
- Individual beneficiary oriented works can be taken up on the cards of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, small or marginal farmers or beneficiaries of land reforms or beneficiaries under the Indira Awaas Yojana of the Government of India.
- Within 15 days of submitting the application or from the day work is demanded, wage employment will be provided to the applicant.
- Right to get unemployment allowance in case employment is not provided within fifteen days of submitting the application or from the date when work is sought.
- Social Audit of MGNREGA works is mandatory, which lends to accountability and transparency.
- The Gram Sabha is the principal forum for wage seekers to raise their voices and make demands.
- It is the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat which approves the shelf of works under MGNREGA and fixes their priority.

### **What is the Role of Gram Sabha?**

- It determines the order of priority of works in the meetings of the Gram Sabha keeping in view potential of the local area, its needs, and local resources.
- Monitor the execution of works within the GP.

### **What are the Roles of Gram Panchayat?**

- Receiving applications for registration
- Verifying registration applications
- Registering households
- Issuing Job Cards (JCs)
- Receiving applications for work
- Issuing dated receipts for these applications for work
- Allotting work within fifteen days of submitting the application or from the date when work is sought in the case of an advance application.
- Identification and planning of works, developing shelf of projects including determination of the order of their priority.

### **What are the Responsibilities of State Government in MGNREGA?**

- Frame Rules on matters pertaining to State responsibilities under Section 32 of the Act and to Develop and notify the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme for the State.
- Set up the State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC).
- Set up a State level MGNREGA implementation agency/ mission with adequate number of high calibre professionals.
- Set up a State level MGNREGA social audit agency/directorate with adequate number of people with knowledge on MGNREGA processes and demonstrated commitment to social audit.
- Establish and operate a State Employment Guarantee Fund (SEGK).